

SECTION XVIII.

POSTS, TELEGRAPHS, AND TELEPHONES.

§ 1. Posts.

1. **The Commonwealth Postal Department.**—Under the provisions of section 51 of the Commonwealth Constitution Act the Commonwealth Parliament was empowered to make laws with respect to the control of the postal, telegraphic, and telephonic services in Australia, and by proclamation, made under section 69 of the same Act, the six separate State Post and Telegraph Departments were amalgamated and taken over by the Federal Executive on the 1st March, 1901. On the 1st December following, the Commonwealth Post and Telegraph Act 1901 came into operation, and the provisions of the various State Acts referring to the postal and telegraphic services thereby ceased to apply; it was, however, specially provided by the Act of 1901 that until such provisions should be revoked by the Governor-General, all regulations in force and all rates and charges levied under any State Act should continue in force and be applied in the same manner as if such State Act were not affected by the Commonwealth Act. The administration of the Act of 1901 was placed in the hands of a Postmaster-General, a responsible Minister with Cabinet rank, and of a Secretary having chief control of the Department throughout the Commonwealth under the Postmaster-General, whilst a principal officer in each State was provided for under the style of Deputy Postmaster-General. The rates and charges levied in each State for the transmission of letters, telegrams, and postal articles at the date of Federation remained in force until the Post and Telegraph Rates Act came into operation on the 1st November, 1902. This Act secured uniformity throughout the Commonwealth in the rates charged for the conveyance of newspapers by post, and for the transmission of telegrams, but did not alter the charges made in the individual States for the transmission of letters, cards, parcels, and packets. Uniform postage rates now exist in all the States under the Postal Rates Act of 1910, which came into operation by proclamation on the 1st May, 1911. (See paragraph 7 hereof.)

2. **Postal Services in Early Days.**—The first Australian office for postal purposes was established in Sydney by Lieutenant-Governor Paterson under a Government order dated the 25th April, 1809, and the site selected was in High-street (now known as George-street) at the residence of Mr. Isaac Nicholls. The duties of this office were extended in June, 1810, by Governor Macquarie, who established it as a regular post office, at which all parcels and letters, either colonial or foreign, were to be deposited previous to their distribution. After the establishment of this office in Sydney very little improvement in regard to postal matters took place for a number of years, and it was not until 1825 that an Act was passed by Sir Thomas Brisbane, with the advice of the Council, "to regulate the postage of letters in New South Wales." A proclamation under this Act was issued, fixing the rates of postage and the salaries and allowances of postmasters, and inviting tenders for the conveyance of mails between Sydney and Parramatta, Windsor and Liverpool; between Liverpool and Campbelltown; from Parramatta to Emu Plains, and thence to Bathurst. It was not, however, until 1828 that the provisions of the Act were put into full force and a system of general post-office communication was established. In that year rates of postage were fixed, depending

upon the distance and the difficulty of transmission. The lowest single inland rate was threepence and the highest one shilling, the postage on a letter increasing according to its weight, the minimum fee being charged on letters not exceeding a quarter of an ounce. The fee for newspapers was one penny. Letters from New South Wales to Van Diemen's Land were charged threepence each, while other letters by ship were charged fourpence each single rate, and sixpence for any weight in excess. The Act of 1825 was amended by the Postal Act of 1835, under which the Governor was authorised to establish a General Post Office in Sydney, and to make rules and regulations, and to fix rates for the conveyance of letters and parcels. In 1837 a post office was established in Melbourne, and a fortnightly service was established between that city and Sydney. In the same year stamps were introduced in the form of stamped covers or wrappers, which are said to have been the first postage stamps ever used. Post offices were established and a postal service was organised in the other States of the Commonwealth shortly after their settlement, and a tolerably good overland service by horses and mail coaches soon developed between the capitals and the up-country towns, villages, and stations as settlement progressed.

3. Development of Postal Services.—In 1841 the number of post offices open in Australia was 102, situated mainly in New South Wales and Tasmania. At the end of ten years 101 post offices were open in New South Wales, 44 in Victoria, 72 in South Australia, and 51 in Tasmania. From the year 1851 onwards a remarkable increase in the number of post offices in Australia took place, until, in 1891, the number open on the mainland and Tasmania totalled 4463, of which 1384 were situated in New South Wales, 1729 in Victoria, 307 in Queensland, 629 in South Australia, 86 in Western Australia, and 328 in Tasmania.

On the 31st December, 1910, the postal business had increased to such an extent that 5506 post offices were open for business, of which number 1911 were situated in New South Wales, 1655 in Victoria, 558 in Queensland, 648 in South Australia, 343 in Western Australia, and 391 in Tasmania.

4. State, Interstate and Oversea Postages for whole Commonwealth, 1901 to 1910.—In the following table the matter dealt with is divided into (i.) matter posted in the Commonwealth for delivery within the Commonwealth, (ii.) matter received from places outside the Commonwealth, (iii.) matter despatched to places outside the Commonwealth, and (iv.) total postal matter dealt with by the Commonwealth Postal Department 1901 to 1910, but excluding Interstate Excess.

**STATE, INTERSTATE, AND OVERSEA POSTAGES FOR WHOLE COMMONWEALTH,
1901 to 1910.**

| Year. | Letters and Postcards. | Newspapers. | Parcels. | Packets. |
|---|------------------------|-------------|----------|----------|
| POSTED FOR DELIVERY WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH (,000 OMITTED). | | | | |
| 1901 | 210,205 | 92,383 | 1,253 | 36,395 |
| 1902 | 231,726 | 87,468 | 1,339 | 36,783 |
| 1903 | 232,865 | 78,521 | 1,515 | 35,659 |
| 1904 | 243,869 | 82,011 | 1,640 | 38,897 |
| 1905 | 271,492 | 86,205 | 1,807 | 45,466 |
| 1906 | 296,410 | 91,589 | 2,112 | 49,095 |
| 1907 | 303,069 | 92,223 | 2,363 | 64,786 |
| 1908 | 329,013 | 96,359 | 2,508 | 68,569 |
| 1909 | 347,514 | 107,516 | 2,741 | 76,348 |
| 1910 | 363,893 | 118,674 | 2,956 | 76,991 |